

# Web 2.Oh. . .really?

A skeptic's guide to emerging web technologies

## Moving Day: 2ohreally.com

Posted 17, October, 2008 by Craig Stoltz

Categories: [Uncategorized](#)

Hey, this blog has gone legit. I've moved it to <http://2ohreally.com>

If you'd like to return, **update your bookmarks**. Might help to **resubscribe to the RSS feed too**. It's supposed to convert automatically, but you never know.

See you on the other side. . . .

Comments: [2 Comments](#)

## Kill the Paper, Save the News

Posted 8, October, 2008 by Craig Stoltz

Categories: [Uncategorized](#)

Today the Interactive Advertising Bureau sent out a press release crowing about the [continued growth of online advertising](#).

Short version: **Interactive ad revenue up 15 percent for first half of 2008 vs. first half of 2007**. Total revenues topped \$11 billion for the first six months of '08.

The day before, my favorite news-about-the-news newsletter, [I WANT MEDIA](#), included the following items, in this order:

### [Newspaper Publishers' Sales Estimates Cut](#)

Bloomberg

Gannett, New York Times and E.W. Scripps may post steeper revenue declines than expected through 2009, with cost cuts failing to mitigate the drop, says a report from Wachovia Capital Markets. Newspaper industry revenue is forecast to fall 14.1% in 2008 and 9.8% in 2009.

### [Tribune: LA Times May Cut 75 Editorial Jobs](#)

LA Observed

The Los Angeles Times is said to be looking at cutting another 75 editorial jobs through voluntary departures and layoffs as owner Tribune continues to struggle with revenue declines. If implemented, the layoffs would come barely two months into the tenure of publisher Eddy Hartenstein.

### [Freedom's Tribune to Cut 142 Jobs, Downsize](#)

KPNX

Freedom Communications is "realigning the structure" of its East Valley Tribune in Mesa, Ariz., cutting 142 jobs and closing operations in Scottsdale and Tempe. Delivery to four regional areas will be scaled back to four days a week. The paper is promising to continue daily Web updates.

## The Point of 2.Oh?

My mission: To cast a weary eye on the alarming, annoying and occasionally amazing uses of Web 2.0 [aka "social media"] technology. I'm delighted this blog was named a [Time.com Top 25 blog](#). Me: Craig Stoltz, web consultant, former editorial director of Revolution Health, ex-editor at The Washington Post, recidivist blogger.



Subscribe in a reader

Subscribe by e-mail



BOOKMARK

## Recent Comments

[ergonomi](#) on [Interact08: Marissa Mayer, Live!](#)

[redball81](#) on [CNN: Leading the pack in. . .newswriting?](#)

[Mariel](#) on [Rick Sanchez Debuts Twitter on TV](#)

[Jen](#) on [Rick Sanchez Debuts Twitter on TV](#)

## Top Posts

[Rick Sanchez Debuts Twitter on TV](#)

[Proposed: A Stock-Table Newspaper Tax](#)

[Dear Facebook: Bite Me](#)  
[The Weekly UsabilityTube Review: NBC 24/7 Video](#)

## Recurrent Obsessions

[2.D'oh! Round-Ups](#)  
[advertising](#) [AP](#) [asap](#) [blogging](#)  
[CNN](#) [crowdsourcing](#) [dataviz](#)  
[Digg](#) [Facebook](#) [Google](#) [health](#)

[Health 2.0](#) [journalism](#)  
[legal issues](#) [LinkedIn](#) [magazines](#)

[mapping](#) [McCain](#) [media](#)  
[Microsoft](#) [MySpace](#) [NBC](#)

#### [Media General Slims Down Tampa Tribune](#)

Tampa Bay Business

The Tampa Tribune is unveiling a slimmed down print version as part of an effort to cut costs. The Media General newspaper is reducing its multiple sections to two Monday through Friday. The new Trib reflects what readers tell us they "want in a daily newspaper," says top editor Janet Coats.

#### [Philadelphia Papers Miss Interest Payment](#)

Associated Press

Philadelphia Media Holdings, which owns the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Philadelphia Daily News, missed an interest payment once again as it seeks a new agreement with lenders to account for the continuing decline the company expects in advertising revenue.

#### [Greenspun Media Restructures, Cuts 20 Jobs](#)

Las Vegas Review-Journal

Greenspun Media, a publisher of niche newspapers and magazines, is said to be restructuring and laying off 10% of its staff. Greenspun titles include Las Vegas Magazine, Vegas2Go and VegasGolfer. The publisher halted monthly distribution of Las Vegas Life earlier this year.

It brings me no joy to observe this continued bloodbath in the newsrooms of America.

But the sad litany above is clearly related to the continued rise in digital advertising revenues. Instead of laying off people from newspapers and hiding in the basement, leaders who are dedicated to the future of news just have to quit snorting sawdust and *let the newspapers go*. **Not the news, but the newspapers.**

Another item linked to in I WANT MEDIA made the point: Overextended media baron Barry Diller, head of the recently disassembled IAC, talked to the Wall Street Journal.

**WSJ:** *Newspapers are suffering as advertising moves online. You are a director of [Washington Post Co.](#) Do you think newspaper companies will survive?*

**Mr. Diller: If they call themselves newspaper companies they are probably going to be toast.** It will depend absolutely on what the product is. We're still at such an early period to talk about the death of journalism.

Which is to say: There's hope, but only if you drop the paper-and keep the news.

**Comments:** [1 Comment](#)

## Atlantic.com: Putting the "Re-" in Reiterations

Posted 7, October, 2008 by Craig Stoltz

**Categories:** [TheAtlantic.com](#), [journalism](#), [magazines](#), [print-to-digital](#)

**Tags:** [print-to-digital](#), [magazines](#)

The [Atlantic.com](#), web outpost for the improbably long-tenured U.S. magazine, has debuted another iteration. I've lost count of [how many sub-launches](#) of the site there have been just since I've been paying attention.

But that's good. From where I sit, **multiple iterations are the way to progress on the web**. Too often web developers sit for months creating a grand castle, worrying the details until it's just "right." But time passes, opinions multiply, and eventually the grand castle is released as a McMansion with a scrim of Google ads running down the

news [News Corp.](#) [NY Times](#)

Obama [politics](#) [print-to-digital](#) [Publish2](#)

[search](#) [social media](#) [social networks](#) [syndication](#)

[TheAtlantic.com](#) [travel](#) [Twitter](#)

[ugc](#) [Uncategorized](#)

[usability](#) [UsabilityTube](#) [Reviews](#)

video [Web 2.0](#) [Web](#)

[writing](#) [widgets](#) [Wikipedia](#) [wikis](#)

[wisdom of the crowds](#) [Yahoo](#)

[YouTube](#)

Search

## Blogroll

[Bivings Report](#)

[Contentious](#)

[CyberJournalist](#)

[David Rothman](#)

[Engage blog](#)

[Fritinancy](#)

[HealthNewsReview Forums](#)

[HealthNewsReview.org](#)

[InterAct08](#)

[John Kelly's Voxford](#)

[MediaShift](#)

[MiXTMedia](#)

[PBS Engage](#)

[Planet Web 2.0](#)

[Publishing 2.0](#)

[Recovering Journalist](#)

[TechPresident](#)

[The Health Care Blog](#)

[The Social Times](#)

[TwinTech](#)



## Events, Sightings, Curiosities

[Papparazi'd](#) at the Twin Tech I Party in Washington, D.C.

[A widget](#) featuring all my items about healthcare and the '08 presidential election.

[Video](#) of me playing golf riding a Segway.

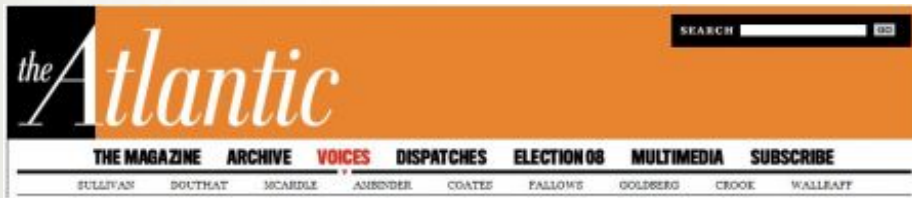
[Interviewed for TechBisnow](#) with Koko, the African Gray parrot, on my shoulder.

[My Twitter feed](#), guaranteed to be less interesting than yours.

side. Three years later, another team is back at it, with pictures of a new castle up on the conference room walls.

Theatlantic.com, by contrast, just keeps pushing out upgrades every few months. Each one gets better, and creates subsequent opportunities to correct and change course.

Here's the new masthead, which anticipates the printed magazine's new retro look:



And here's [editor James Bennet's explanation of what's going on](#).

**Key detail.** A news-ish feature called "The Current" has been renamed "Dispatches." Good move. "Dispatches" I understand. "The Current". . .not so much. More proof that on the web, clear beats clever every time.

**Longstanding grievance:** How could an operation that "gets it" so well **still view the website as a way to sell subscriptions to the petroleum-and-lumber version of the magazine, so much so that it is willing to degrade web user experience in the process of pushing pulp?** Witness:



**FOUR FREAKIN' PROMPTS** TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE PRINTED MAGAZINE, ABOVE THE FOLD, OCCUPYING THE MOST VALUABLE REAL ESTATE ON THE WEBSITE.

Stop that, I tell you, stop that!

**Comments:** [Be the first to comment](#)

## Dataviz of the Week: Map It Yourself

Posted 3, October, 2008 by Craig Stoltz

**Categories:** [dataviz](#), [mapping](#), [mashups](#)

**Tags:** [dataviz](#), [maps](#), [mashups](#)

[Yakov Sverdlov](#), honored Bolshevik leader, Lenin's right-hand man and my late great-great uncle on my mother's side.



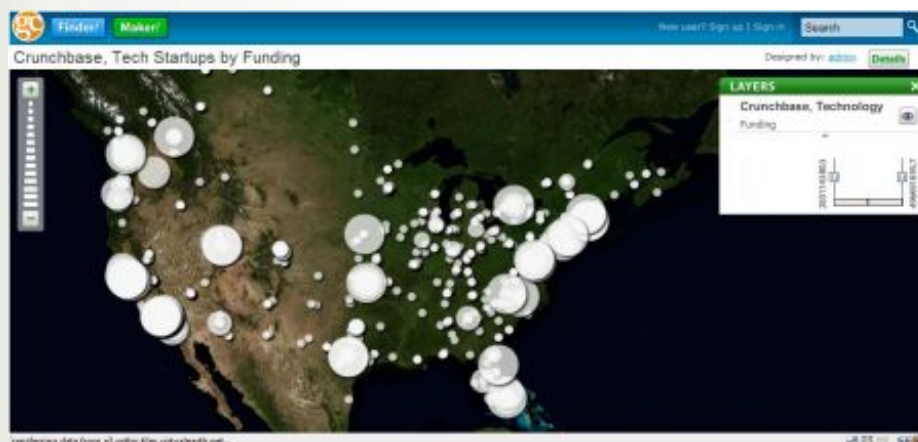
Health Wisdom





FortiusOne, a Washington-area digital mapping company, has released something called Maker!. It's a roll-your-own data visualization tool that allows you to mash up maps with a database and produce something that makes Google Maps look like they were produced by a computer running Windows386.

Below is a **Flash-based map** that takes a database of funding that's gone to tech companies based on size and location. You can instantly see where the money is going.



The data is entirely play-friendly—zoom into geographic areas, choose big or small investments, etc.

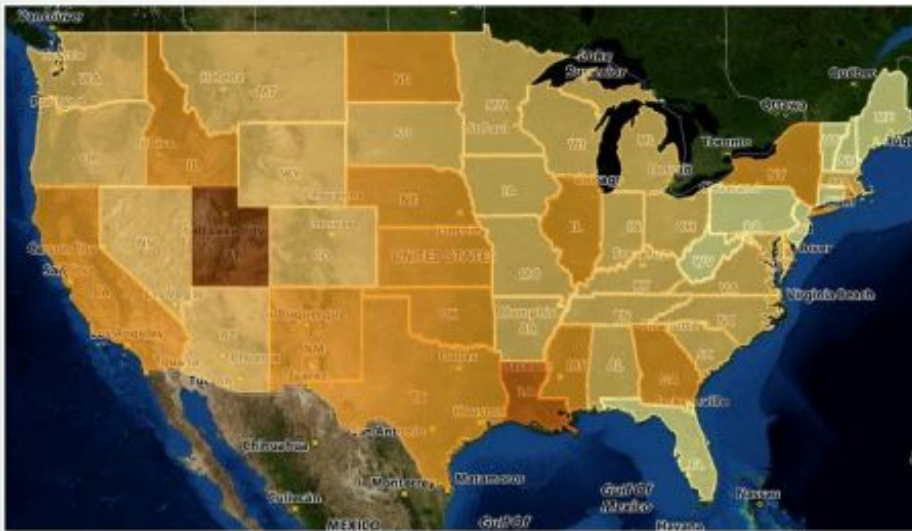
Here I've zeroed in on the D.C. area, where I ply my trade. A popover shows me that one of the big recipients of capital in my home town is **Clearspring**, the nation's lead widgeteer. [Huh. I wonder if they are hiring extremely good natured, value-priced, **virtually hairless web consultants**.] But it also reveals dozens of digital businesses I'd never heard of—GeniusRocket, Acumen, Price Comparison Guru, Brainware—within a 20-minute commute of my home.



The site is easy to build with [though beyond the skills of rank amateurs]. And it's already got a gallery full of some fascinating stuff.

Let's say, for instance, that you're a political operative trying to target women aged 18 to 30 to vote in November. Bam, you've got a map that breaks down this population down to county and city level, all across the U.S.

Of course, such a map could have multiple uses. Let's say you're an unmarried man aged 18 to 30 wondering where the numbers are most likely to work in your favor, potential-mate-wise.



Gentlemen, start your engines.

**Comments:** 1 [Comment](#)

## Debate Hub: How Did C-Span Get So Cool?

Posted 2, October, 2008 by Craig Stoltz

**Categories:** [Biden](#), [C-Span](#), [Obama](#), [Palin](#), [Twitter](#), [digital democracy](#), [media](#), [politics](#), [social media](#), [video](#)

**Tags:** [debates](#), [digital politics](#), [politics](#)

C-Span—the tediously even-handed, eat-your-spinach, 24-hour civics lesson—has somehow caught the Cool2.0 virus. As you prepare for tonight's debate between Sen. Loose and Gov. Moose, check out C-Span's [Debate Hub](#).



Okay, nothing that special here—your basic interactive platform that lets you dig into the debate several different ways.

**But the cool thing is this: Using the hub, you can pluck snippets of video in near-real time, snag the code and circulate it to make whatever mischief you want.**

See a condescending Biden scowl? Grab it, post it to YouTube, and

Tweet the url before he's bloviating on the next question.

Like the way Palin crinkles her nose like a schoolgirl when she's trying to discourage additional questions? Grab 'em and e-mail 'em to your brother in minutes!

You can mash the content up into comic repartee worthy of Neil Simon before Chris Matthews is on MSNBC praising Biden's stalwart performance!

This is all possible thanks to the Debate Hub's near-real-time debate timeline, which will spill out transcript and video as the action progresses. Here's the timeline from the Oxford, Miss., debate between Obama and McCain.



I suspect C-Span didn't realize it was creating a mischief-o-matic when it launched this site. But it certainly knew it was stretching its brand image. Why else would it include this graphic representing the words used most in the debate by each candidate?

□

And why else would it publish a real-time Twitter feed? And live blog entry aggregation?

If C-Span-whose average viewer is probably about as old as John McCain-has gone so deeply into democracy 2.0, something truly revolutionary is happening with our politics.

**People are participating in it.**

Are we sure we want to encourage this sort of nonsense?

Comments: [3 Comments](#)

## Interact08: Marissa Mayer, Live!

Posted 29, September, 2008 by Craig Stoltz

Categories: [Google](#), [search](#)

Tags: [Google](#), [Interact08](#), [Marissa Mayer](#)

Google's Out-in-Front Woman, speaking at Interact08. High points via liveblog:

**1. 20 percent time.** At one point, 50 percent of Google's newer products came from the "20 percent time"—the 20 percent of time all Google staffers are allotted to work on personal stuff with no relationship to their current "real" work. Drives constant innovation.

**2. Beyond the wiki:** Internal 2.0 at Google HQ: Every Monday, people file their "snippets"—5 bullets of what they're working on. All are submitted, published, searchable-transparent organization to share knowledge easily.

**3. Behind the curtain.** Shows a diagram that illustrates how a query moves from end user, through the massive Google backend, and back to the user. How? Via 400-1,000 machines! All in .2 seconds! Um, cool, in a hyperspeed 1999 way.

**4. Castle-building vs. iterating.** Instead of building the One Great Thing for years [as Apple famously does], Google launches products "early and often," driven by response to users.

**5. How do you iterate?** Use *data* to drive decisions. "Data is apolitical."

**6. So: Split A/B testing** [*n.b. a case of spontaneous generation; Amazon came up with the same technique at the same time*]. Different users see different products or results, and the outcomes of these interactions drive future iterations. **Great example** about how *subtle differences in vertical spacing* had effects on search behavior. **Also**, via same technique: *users liked blue, not yellow, boxes for search ads*. **Also**, Google launched with 10 results per page. When they put more results on page to see if that's the right number, searches dropped 20 percent. Why? *Slower delivery of results, as tiny as those differences are, discourage people*. **And:** Adwords succeeded because of *immediate posting of ads*.

**7. Future of Search?** One Saturday, Mayer kept track of all her searches that didn't produce results. She showed a whole presentation screen to show all the failures. Among them: What is the largest city in Russia after Moscow and St. Petersburg? "J.C. Penney" near an obscure town in South Dakota, many dozen others.

So how will search improve over the coming years?

### New Modes

Ubiquitous mobile—in car, wearable devices, eyeglass displays,



watch that keeps track as you speak and produces results. You can embed search into everyday life.

New inputs—why can't you *talk* to a search engine, or type in natural language? Why can't you use an image or tune as your search query?

### **New Media**

Google search results currently return 10 urls. Maybe it can produce 10 “answers”? Or: Now we return some video for proper queries [“how to do the charleston dance” query produces a video that shows you how]. “How to tie a bow tie” is better—the search currently returns diagrams and demos. Media needs to respond more to the nature of the query.

### **Personalization**

The coming engines will understand more about the user—based on geography, past searches, personal preferences, who your friends are, other contextual information, etc.

*Takeaway impressions:* Google's process of persistent iteration explains why they remain market leaders. The use of “20 percent” time drives the company forward. Mayer is brilliant.

Damn. I hate it when Google looks indestructible.

**Comments:** [2 Comments](#)

## **Interact08: Two 2. Advertising companies to check out**

Posted 29, September, 2008 by Craig Stoltz

**Categories:** [Web 2.0](#), [advertising](#), [marketing](#), [social networks](#)

**Tags:** [marketing](#), [social marketing](#), [Web 2.0](#)

[www.zadby.com](#): Video advertising platform

[www.mobileposse.com](#): Puts ads on idle cell phone screens

**Comments:** [Be the first to comment](#)

## **LiveBlog Interact08, cont'd: Creativity**

Posted 29, September, 2008 by Craig Stoltz

**Categories:** [Web 2.0](#), [media](#), [social media](#), [social networks](#)

**Tags:** [Web 2.0](#), [social media](#), [Interact08](#)

### **Pith load from panel on creativity**

“Creativity is not being a designer or programming, it's the ability to solve a problem.”

### **Joanna Champagne, National Gallery of Art, on government use of social media**

In process of expanding digital programs. Why not still use the “best



architects" in the digital program? We want a website that does the same thing.

Must be true to the spirit of our founding...Andrew Mellon! How do we make the digital world that's...as solid and fundamental? He said: "This is a new relationship between paint and stone." We want to give the gift again in the digital world.

Website hasn't been touched in 10 years. How to be true to the mission in the digital environment? Ideas:

**Pilot and Play.** It opens doors, sounds unthreatening.

Launched a mobile tool, a cellphone tour, to learn where the audience is geographically--and to provide a remote way to tour the museum. "Endears" people to the collection.

Example two: Interactive tables--touchscreen in the midst of the exhibition hall.

Iterate until you have enough successes to win support.

**Be Yourself Online.** Even for government organizations.

Postal service site is "gorgeous," partnered with John Adams and Star Wars. Department of Education also very good. "Improve morale" as image of agency is transformed via consumer-facing web.

**Leave the Building.** Hard to get outside the office.

Put reprints outside on walls to literally get out of building.

Use Facebook. So many museum sites on Facebook--it's become a forum for museum insiders to connect and share good ideas.

## **Nick Law, Creativity in the Digital Age**

Two examples of leveraging user involvement with technology to elevate the brand experience.

**NikeiD.com:** User-generated shoes, online. Not a matter of art director and copy writer going off somewhere. It's about creating an interface--needs to be emotional, have brand texture to it.

**NikePlus:** Links music [iPod], athletics [running], technology [sensor in shoe] and social community [web interface for events, personal information, real-time dialog, sharing information, post-race creativity]. 780,000 ran a 10k with NikePlus, linking this all.

**Comments:** [Be the first to comment](#)

## **LiveBlog Interact08: Marketing with Social Web**

Posted 29, September, 2008 by Craig Stoltz

**Categories:** [Web 2.0](#), [social networks](#)

**Tags:** [social media](#), [Interact08](#), [marketing](#)

## Ripe quotes from Brian Williams, Viget Labs

"Your product is your marketing campaign." For instance: Google, iPhone

Your business, whether you like it or not, is accessible, transparent, and authentic. Even if the only presence on the web is from a disgruntled employee from two years ago—that's your business.

How to get aboard? Unleash your inner geek: Just jump on, sign up for Twitter. It's changing constantly. But at least you need to understand what this space is like.

For businesses, "De-specialize." Everybody needs to participate in social engagement online.

### From John Bell, Ogilvy PR, 360 degree Digital Experience

"The Attention Crash"—people fatigued by new, multiple technologies. How do you drink from the firehose without drowning? Give yourself a certain amount of time each week for experimentation.

Need for constant, fast internal training. Things move so fast it has to be regular. [Now trying "Yammer," Twitter for the enterprise.]

**Comments:** [Be the first to comment](#)

## Ted Leonsis, Part 2

Posted 29, September, 2008 by Craig Stoltz

**Categories:** [Web 2.0](#), [social networks](#)

**Tags:** [social web](#), [Ted Leonsis](#), [Web 2.0](#)

I had a chance to ask Leonsis a couple of questions:

### How can the social web help during the current economic crisis?

His new investment, Revolution Money, will reduce the "tax" consumers have paid for credit card use. Merchants will be charged .5 percent per transaction. This smaller tax will be passed along to consumers, but it's far less.

### How can the social web help folks on the ground who are scared and in economic peril?

The startup costs of new businesses have plunged—the "eBay economy." He points to the host's \$9 cufflinks made by a jeweler in England who can find customers overseas. Millions of people can start businesses, some of which can become big businesses.

**Comments:** [Be the first to comment](#)

